



SUIT UP MAINE

February 14, 2020

Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

The following testimony is offered in support of LD 2094, An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act, on behalf of Suit Up Maine, a statewide, all-volunteer constituent network with a mission to create a more informed and engaged electorate in Maine.

Maine's government has a long history of breaking promises to the Wabanaki Tribes, resulting in deeply ingrained generational trauma that remains to this day. We applaud the efforts of Maine legislators and Governor Mills to acknowledge the harm and welcome remedies that restore good faith and trust between parties. The Task Force on Changes to the Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act performed a critical role in this effort by highlighting long-standing causes of friction and making recommendations to address them, based on mutual agreement and benefit.

For 40 years, language in the settlement has been used to treat the Tribes as little more than municipalities, leaving them with fewer rights than those of all other federally recognized Tribes across the country. We agree with tribal leaders, who argue that the act is a "failed experiment" that hamstring Tribal economic development and perpetuates disparities in education, health care, and public safety between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

The importance of the work the Task Force undertook cannot be understated. Similarly, the recommended changes to the Implementing Act are essential to demonstrating, in good faith, that Maine recognizes the Passamaquoddy Tribe, Penobscot Nation, and Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians as sovereign nations. The 22 changes recommended by the Task Force address issues at the core of self governance and sovereignty: criminal justice, the usage and protection of natural resources, land management and acquisition, and revenue. For any sovereign nation to be able to sustainably provide for and protect its people, it must maintain agency in these areas.

Suit Up Maine fully supports the recommendations of the Task Force, and urges the committee to enact all of them by supporting this bill.

Sincerely,

Karin Leuthy
Founder, Suit Up Maine